Ottawa metro

Your essential daily news | WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2017

High 2°C/Low 0°C Finally not snowing

VICKY MOCHAMA
Now will the real Obamas please stand up
metroVIEWS

Rhéaume Laplante is one of the passionate volunteers helping rebuild a piece of history.
DYLAN C. ROBERTSON/METRO

BACK ON TRACKS

Historic Ottawa streetcar en route to restoration by Canada Day

metroNEWS

City no longer feeling the Vibe (Lounge)

HINTONBURG

Notorious bar's closure called 'slow and frustrating'

Dylan C. Robertson
For Metro | Ottawa

A Hintonburg shisha restaurant-bar notorious for nearby crime will be closing its doors March 31.

The owners of Vibe Lounge have agreed with the city not to renew its lease, expiring at the end of March.

That negotiation was presented Tuesday, at a meeting that would have weighed evidence on whether to permanently revoke Vibe's food licence, which was suspended last month after 17-year-old Leslie Mwakio was fatally shot around the corner.

Just steps from Wellington West's trendy cafés, Vibe opened in the summer of 2012, after moving from Preston Street. Within a year, a man was shot near the lounge's front doors.

Vibe has changed its offerings from food to shisha to alcohol until its liquor licence was revoked in February 2016. Located in the ground floor of a Somerset Street West office complex, Vibe's windows are perpetually blocked out.

Cheryl Parrott, a Hintonburg Community Association board member, said the closure follows a "slow and frustrating" effort to have it closed. Residents complained of escalating danger, from outside fights, to drinking and syringes found in the parking lot.

"If a resident asks them to quiet down ... their lives have been threatened," said Parrot, who counted 150 people at a meeting about Vibe last month. "It's not just one person who's disgruntled."

Vibe's owner complained last month of being singled out for shootings that "could happen anywhere."

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metro NEWS

Your essential daily news

Dylann Roof sentenced to death for killing nine people in Charleston, South Carolina. **World**

MAINTENANCE

Winter wallop continues

Ryan Tumilty
Metro | Ottawa

Ottawa's winter that won't stop is keeping city crews busy and costs mounting to deal with snow.

According to Luc Gagné, manager of roads services the city has dealt with 148 centimetres of snow between Nov. 1 and Tuesday morning, not including the heavy snow that fell Tuesday evening.

That compares to a 20-year average snowfall of just 87 centimetres per season with a lot of winter still ahead for the city.

"We still have the majority of January, February and March to get through and there are always some nasty events in February and March," said Gagné. "It doesn't appear to be record setting, but it definitely will be above our average."

Gagné said the city follows standards regardless of how much it has snowed and they have been sticking to them through this heavy winter.

"We have a set of quality standards passed by our city council and we simply adhere to them for every event," he said.

To deal with an expected 10 to 15 centimetres that was anticipated to fall Tuesday evening into Wednesday morning, the city had imposed a parking ban from 1 a.m. to 7 p.m.

He said the ban helps crews move more efficiently and better clean up the roads.

"If there is a car in the way you can't plow to the curb it's really that simple," he said. "We have to come back (that) day or the next day to clean up where that car is."

The city's snow budget is based on the calendar year, not the season meaning there is a chance heavy snowfalls now will be offset by a gentler start to the winter later in 2017.

Gagné said they don't have numbers for the 2016 budget fully calculated, but said they did have a lot of snow in both early and late 2016.

The city spent $67.4 million on snow removal in 2015 and budgeted $63 million for 2016.

Ice Dragon Boat Festival calls Dow's Lake home

RECREATION

Paddlers from around the world to race in February event

Haley Ritchie
Metro | Ottawa

Metro spoke with Dragon Boat Festival CEO John Brooman about the first Ice Dragon Boat Festival in North America, which will take place Feb. 17 and 18 in Ottawa this year.

What is ice dragon boating?

In the simplest terms it's a dragon boat on skates.

A company in China called Champion Boats came up with the concept. Initially they made a skate attachment that fit onto a dragon boat. After testing that for a while they were able to come up with a new design that is very specific to ice. It's much, much lighter. This thing would not go on the water.

The paddle itself — picture a broomstick with a horse hoof on the end. That horse hoof has a compressed spring and every time you press the horse hoof onto the ice it exposes seven picks. That's how you propel the boat.

> "Not one single person that will be in attendance at this event has ever tried it before. John Brooman

Where else has this been done before?

(China, Hungary) and Mongolia, that's it. You need the ice, so it's not happening in Ecuador. It's just been seen in China, Budapest once and Mongolia. It's very, very new.

We toyed with the concept and tried to figure out how we could bring this to Ottawa, and ultimately we said 'Wouldn't this be an interesting thing to be part of Winterlude?' The deal involved Heritage, the NCC, us and the folks in China.

The tickets for teams are already sold out?

We built an online registration system and we sold out in eight minutes. We currently have 55 teams on the waiting list. We're surprised. We have teams from all around the world.

Not one single person that will be in attendance at this event has ever tried it before. These are all hardcore paddlers from around the world that are intrigued by the concept and they want to come to Ottawa to try it.

Where will the races be held?

Dow's Lake. This is the first winter I've ever been praying for as much cold as possible. It's a risky venture because of the fact that the canal closes. No canal, no event.

Eight specialized ice dragon boats have been shipped to Montreal for the Winterlude races and will come to Ottawa in time for the races. CONTRIBUTED

SECURITY

Police see national trend in mail fraud incidents

Canada's anti-fraud centre saw a big increase in fraudulent mail forwarding cases and the head of Ottawa Police's fraud unit is encouraging people to buy mailboxes with locks.

The fraud centre reported earlier this month that cases of mail being fraudulently forwarded to a new address have jumped sevenfold across Canada this year.

Sgt. James Ritchie, head of the organized fraud unit, said he doesn't have hard numbers but he's fairly confident Ottawa is not immune to that trend.

"We have seen a lot of it this year and anecdotally it seems like they are up," he said.

Ritchie said the cases usually involve suspects taking mail and using it to apply for credit cards in a person's name. They then have that mail forwarded to a new address before the credit card arrives.

Ritchie said people should monitor their mailboxes and be vigilant if items aren't turning up.

"If you have items in the mail that you're expecting that aren't showing up or you have no mail for a couple of days when you usually get mail every day that should be a red flag. I would be calling Canada Post."

He said the new community mailboxes are likely not the problem, because the boxes are locked and often more secure than mailboxes in front of people's homes.

"The mail is actually locked, whereas most people who have mail on the front porch, there is no lock on it," he said.

He said people should consider a mailbox that locks, because a lot of personal information like credit cards, driver's licenses and other important items ends up in the mail.

"If someone steals that, they have quite a bit of information on you already."

RYAN TUMILTY/METRO

TWITTER

Feds buy first emoji

Dylan C. Robertson
For Metro | Ottawa

The federal heritage department has launched the government's first ever Twitter emoji to celebrate 150 years of confederation.

Since Christmas Day, all tweets with the hashtag #Canada150 include a red outline of the Canada 150 logo, described by the department as a "maple leaf which is composed of 'celebratory gems.'"

Canadian Heritage spokeswoman Geneviève Dubois-Richard said, in an email to Metro, Twitter designed the emoji based off of the logo, and it will run until Dec. 31. She said the 72-square pixel emoji was included in a paid marketing and advertising package.

While Twitter users can use any standard emoji in tweets, a hashtag that includes a custom emoji has to be approved by Twitter. Brands like Coca-Cola and Star Wars have paid for these custom emoji, sometimes called "hashflags," reportedly for $1 million US.

The Canada 150 logo was the result of a design competition.

IN BRIEF

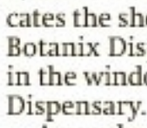
Child porn charges laid

A Vanier man is facing child-pornography charges after a July tip lead to a Tuesday raid. Marc Chubb, 46, has been arrested on one charge of distributing child pornography and one charge of possessing it. He is due in court Wednesday. METRO

Pot shop raided on Friday, back in business Monday

MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES

Police say have to get warrant again to shut down a store



Haley Ritchie
Metro | Ottawa

Despite a raid on Chinatown's CannaBotanix Dispensary at 646 Somerset St. Friday that saw two people arrested, the shop was back to normal operations Monday.

The employee inside the shop said she couldn't talk about the raid and said to call the owner.

A chalkboard in the entrance lists the owner's name as "Grant" and a number to call in case of any problems. The number goes straight to voicemail and has a 520 area code indicating the Victoria area.

8

The number of marijuana dispensaries police have raided in Ottawa since November.

The store appears to be a sister location for another shop in Centretown. The sign out front indicates the shop is called CannaBotanix Dispensary, but signs in the window read Sylk Medy Dispensary.

A number of other shops in Ottawa that have been raided have since reopened.

Police can't automatically shut down a store after a raid — if they have evidence that operations are continuing, they have to begin the warrant process again.

"There's a lot involved in getting a warrant, whether it's having it signed or getting evidence towards having it signed. For the court purposes we need a lot of specific information to get it signed, so it can take a lot of time and we can't discuss those techniques," said police spokesperson Cst. Chuck Benoit, based on information from Staff Sgt. Rick Carey.

"As a police service we investigate any criminal activities, so if it restarts into illegal activity inside then we move forward with what we've been doing in the past year," he said.

Chinatown's CannaBotanix Dispensary at 646 Somerset Street. HALEY RITCHIE/METRO

On Friday police arrested two adults — a man and a woman — inside the shop. They are both facing multiple drug trafficking charges. Police also seized marijuana, THC edibles, THC gummies, THC pills, cellphones and an undisclosed amount of cash.

Police haven't been identifying the people charged after the shops are raided. Benoit said that step isn't to protect those charged but to "keep the integrity of the investigation."

"They're being charged. They're doing an illegal activity. It is an ongoing investigation, it's continuous. We're not done investigating all these shops," he said.

> **If it restarts into illegal activity inside then we move forward with what we've been doing in the past year.** Cst. Chuck Benoit

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A streetcar named inspire

HERITAGE

Passionate volunteers rebuild piece of history

Dylan C. Robertson
For Metro | Ottawa

Built in 1917 with wood and steel, Ottawa's Streetcar 696 is getting a new lease on life as a passionate group of volunteers, push to have it back on track for Canada Day.

The effort is now an all-hands-on-board project bringing together teenagers, retirees and local companies.

"We do this because we love it," says Rhéaume Laplante, a retired OC Transpo repair shop supervisor.

Streetcar 696 circled between Rockcliffe Park and Britannia until it was retired in 1958 and left rotting under a museum's outdoor tarp for three decades. The agency obtained the streetcar in 1989, and started an occasional volunteer effort to restore it back in 2000.

The Ottawa streetcar should be ready to be unveiled on Canada Day. DYLAN C. ROBERTSON/FOR METRO

After retiring, Laplante threw himself into the project, hoping that co-ordinating the project would make the streetcar ready for its 100th anniversary, and Canada 150 celebrations.

For the past few years, roughly 20 volunteers meet Wednesday evenings and Friday business hours to replicate the rotting wooden parts, and salvage any useable steel parts. "We're like a family — we tease each other, we go to Timmies after," Laplante says.

The project is now 80 per cent completed, Laplante says, with windows and vents being put in place. They've worked without blueprints, nor the tools used a century ago. Constructing the rear double-doors is the last major task, before the whole body gets a coat of poppy-red paint.

He's now in talks to have the final project mounted on temporary tracks at Lansdowne Park.

Laplante said the project costs about $500,000, most of which has been covered through corporate donations. For example, the floorboard is made of wood reclaimed from the bottom of the Ottawa River, donated by Logs End.

The rest of the project funding comes from selling vintage merchandise. Rideau High School shop students have helped out, as have people assigned community service hours by provincial court.

Laplante is seeking donations and volunteers, especially with experience in wood, steel, upholstery or electric wiring. But "some might not have those skills, and we're willing to show them welding, painting; lots of different tasks."

HEALTH SERVICES

Trim on spending: Report

Ontario must cut health spending $2.8 billion by 2019 to meet its balanced budget targets, the province's financial accountability office warns in a new report.

The 59-page analysis released Tuesday also cautions that "cost drivers" in the system — such as aging baby boomers — raise questions as to whether current service levels can hold if growth in spending is kept to two per cent a year.

Citing controls on the province's $51.8 billion health budget as "critical" to meeting Premier Kathleen Wynne's promise to balance the books by 2018, the watchdog says pressures on health spending could, in fact, increase to 5.3 per cent a year by 2020.

"Ultimately, the growth rate of health sector expense after 2018-19 will depend on whether program changes made to date have resulted in efficiencies and quality improvements or simply delayed expenses that will need to be incurred to maintain quality and service levels," says the report.

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PM Justin Trudeau holds a press conference as he's joined by his newly sworn-in ministers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cabinet shuffle: Who's in and out

Justin Trudeau promoted many up-and-coming MPs on Tuesday as part of a shakeup aimed in part at preparing for a Donald Trump presidency.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Foreign Affairs

CHRYSTIA FREELAND leaves the trade portfolio to replace veteran Liberal MP **STEPHANE DION**, who announced Tuesday that he plans to leave active politics. Freeland is a cabinet superstar, credited with navigating through the Canada-European Union free trade agreement — potentially valuable experience for dealing with the incoming Trump administration.

Immigration

AHMED HUSSEN, a Somali-born rookie MP in Toronto, is taking over the immigration portfolio from **JOHN MCCALLUM**, who is leaving politics to become ambassador to China.

Democratic Reform

KARINA GOULD of Burlington, Ont., takes Democratic Institutions from Maryam Monsef. Meanwhile, Monsef — widely criticized for her handling of Trudeau's promise to reform Canada's voting system — is moving to replace Hajdu at Status of Women.

Labour

PATTY HAJDU, who shone as status of women minister, is taking over the labour portfolio from **MARYANN MIHYCHUK**, who is being dumped from cabinet altogether.

International Trade

FRANCOIS-PHILIPPE CHAMPAGNE, a Quebec MP, takes on the international trade portfolio following the promotion of Chrystia Freeland.

FORT LAUDERDALE

Canadian 10-year-old gets her bear back

Yards from where workers finished the cleanup from the Fort Lauderdale airport shooting, a girl was reunited Tuesday with the teddy bear she left behind while fleeing.

Courtney Gelinas, 10, smiled as Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport spokesman Greg Meyer opened the trunk of his SUV to reveal Rufus, the teddy bear the Windsor, Ont., fifth grader had received from her dying grandfather a decade ago. When Meyer handed her Rufus, she held the bear tight.

Courtney Gelinas holds tight to her stuffed bear Rufus. AP

Courtney was with her parents and siblings and about to board a plane home when officials say Esteban Santiago fatally shot five people one floor below them Friday. Rufus, a brown bear dressed in a red devil costume, was left behind as the family fled onto the tarmac with hundreds of others. Her mother, Kim Lariviere, said Courtney has not slept well since.

"It is exciting and I am happy to have him back," the bashful girl said as she pressed against her mother's legs.

The airport has returned a "substantial" portion of the 25,000 stranded items left behind by fleeing passengers, including luggage, cellphones, baby strollers and "lots of Hello Kitty backpacks," Meyer said.

The airport was nearly back to normal Tuesday. The long lines from the weekend caused by delayed flights are gone.

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Sessions says he'd defy Trump if needed

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Attorney general hopeful rejects racism accusations

Jeff Sessions fervently rejected "damnably false" accusations of past racist comments Tuesday as he challenged Democratic concerns about the civil rights commitment he would bring as Donald Trump's attorney general. He vowed at his confirmation hearing to stay independent from the White House and stand up to Trump when necessary.

Sessions laid out a sharply conservative vision for the Justice Department he would oversee, pledging to crack down on illegal immigration, gun violence and the "scourge of radical Islamic terrorism" and to keep open the Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba.

Attorney General-designate, Sen. Jeff Sessions, is sworn in on Capitol Hill in Washington on Tuesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

But he also distanced himself from some of Trump's public pronouncements.

He said waterboarding, a now-banned harsh interrogation technique that Trump has at times expressed support for, was "absolutely improper and illegal."

Though he said he would prosecute immigrants who repeatedly enter the country illegally and criticized as constitutionally "questionable" an executive action by President Barack Obama that shielded certain immigrants from deportation, he said he did "not support the idea that Muslims, as a religious group, should be denied admission to the United States."

Trump earlier in his campaign called for a temporary total ban on Muslims entering his country but has more recently proposed "extreme vetting."

Sessions asserted that he could confront Trump if needed, saying an attorney general must be prepared to resign if asked to do something "unlawful or unconstitutional."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLAIMS DENIED

Social media lit up Tuesday evening with unverified allegations of a sexual nature regarding Donald Trump, including a claim the Russian government possessed a recording. Trump denied the rumours, tweeting they were "FAKE NEWS — A TOTAL POLITICAL WITCH HUNT!"

METRO

CHARLESTON

Unrepentant Dylann Roof sentenced to death

Dylann Roof was sentenced to death Tuesday for fatally shooting nine black church members during a Bible study session in Charleston, S.C., becoming the first person ordered executed for a federal hate crime.

Dylann Roof
AP

A jury deliberated for about three hours before returning with the decision, capping a trial in which the 22-year-old avowed white supremacist did not fight for his life or show any remorse. He served as his own attorney during sentencing and never asked for forgiveness or mercy or explained the massacre.

Hours earlier, Roof threw away one last chance to plead for his life, telling jurors: "I still feel like I had to do it."

Every juror looked directly at Roof as he spoke for about five minutes. A few nodded as he reminded them that they said during jury selection they could fairly weigh the factors of his case. Only one of them, he noted, had to disagree to spare his life.

"I have the right to ask you to give me a life sentence, but I'm not sure what good it would do anyway," he said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mom loses four kids at Berlin train station

A woman from Peru lost all four of her children at Berlin's main train station Monday after briefly turning her back on them to buy a ticket.

German police said Tuesday that the tearful mother approached officers, who were able to find two of the children wandering around the station. A third turned up at another station in Berlin.

The fourth child, aged 3, was discovered by a conductor on a high-speed train.

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Music clubs losing fight to stay open

GOING OUT

Technology and changing tastes threaten music hubs

Mike Campbell didn't want his Carleton Music Bar and Grill venue in Halifax to join the growing list of Canadian musical haunts forced to close.

The former co-host of MuchMusic's 1990s series Mike and Mike's Excellent X-Canada Adventures tried everything, including a crowdfunding campaign to save the Carleton.

Technological trends, changing listener tastes and a challenging business model are threatening the dedicated performing spaces once home to young hopefuls and grizzled veterans.

Toronto's Hugh's Room became the latest to join the death-watch list when its owner Richard Carson abruptly closed the venue last week to weigh his options. The restaurant and music venue opened in 2001 as a stage for both local and international performers.

Other similar money-losing music hubs have seen their hopes dashed in recent years.

While it's impossible to pinpoint a single reason for why Canada's smaller concert stages are under so much pressure, there are a few recurring challenges. For one, audience habits have significantly changed, Campbell suggests.

A few years ago it would've been common to hit up a pub for drinks before heading to a nightclub, he says, but now many people favour pre-drink gatherings at home. Or, in the social media age, they may not meet in person at all.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Carleton Music Bar and Grill in Halifax joins a growing list of Canadian musical haunts forced to close. THE CANADIAN PRESS

INFRASTRUCTURE

Promised spending slow, watchdog says

The Trudeau government may fall short of spending all the money it planned to devote to infrastructure in the first year of its mandate, says a new analysis released Tuesday by the federal budget watchdog.

The parliamentary budget office found that some of Ottawa's planned infrastructure investments failed to materialize in the first half of 2016-17 and it warned a chunk of the cash may have to be spent in the future.

$2.5 billion

Worth of projects that have been approved, as posted on the Infrastructure Department's website on Tuesday. However, this total did not reflect how much had been spent.

"There is a growing risk that money the government originally expected to be spent in 2016-17 will be deferred to subsequent years," said the report by parliamentary budget officer Jean-Denis Frechette.

A delay in government spending could affect the timing of the investments' primary objective: to help lift the country's slow-growth economy.

In last year's budget, the government projected infrastructure spending to boost real gross domestic product — a measure of economic growth — by 0.2 per cent this year and 0.4 per cent in 2017-18. It's unclear whether a spending delay would have an impact on growth in 2016-17.

Frechette's report said Ottawa's budget and fall economic statement both laid out plans to transfer $3.5 billion in new federal infrastructure money this year to other levels of government.

But it added that federal transfers made by the Transport and Infrastructure departments over the first half of 2016-17 dropped by $100 million compared with the year before.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

REAL ESTATE

Pace of housing starts picks up, says regulator

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. says the annual pace of housing starts in December came in at 207,041 units, up from 187,273 in November.

Regionally, the annual pace of urban starts in December increased in Ontario, Quebec and the Prairies, but decreased in British Columbia and in Atlantic Canada.

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metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Wednesday, January 11, 2017

JESSICA ALLEN ON THE HISTORY OF THE GOLDEN GLOBES

Streep may have undermined herself by making her principled stand at an event whose sponsoring organization is not exactly a paragon of principle.

Almost everyone was fair game for Twitter-borne Snark during the Golden Globes on Sunday: Al Roker, who called Jessica Biel "Jessica Alba"; Jenna Bush, who mashed together the Hidden Figures and Fences to create "Hidden Fences"; and Tom Hiddleston, whose out-of-touch acceptance speech felt longer than his relationship with Taylor Swift.

But Meryl Streep, who delivered a rousing six-minute oration while accepting the Cecil B. DeMille Award, was off limits — save, of course, for the nameless object of her vitriol.

Even now, to criticize Streep would be to commit media hara-kiri. So here goes.

It wasn't her message, that those in power ought to refrain from bullying. It wasn't her call to support the press. It wasn't even when she referred to the room as representing the "most vilified segments in American society right now," although that was a bit rich.

It was that Streep made a principled stand at an event whose sponsoring organization — a group of 90 shadowy, ostensibly foreign reporters who are required to have permanent residences in Southern California — is not exactly a paragon of principle.

I'm talking about the Hollywood Foreign Press. Like nearly every person who's ever accepted a Golden Globe, Streep thanked the association, which according to a 2010 piece by the Toronto Star's Peter Howell, was created in 1943 "by eight foreign journalists living in Hollywood, who were frustrated by their lack of access to top stars."

"They reasoned," Howell wrote, "that creating their own awards might turn things around, and that thinking paid off."

So well, in fact, that today studio publicists extend to HFPA members unfettered access to A-listers, usually in exotic locations, over dinner and drinks, while other critics and journalists are shut out.

Studio publicists extend to HFPA members unfettered access to A-listers while other critics and journalists are shut out.

Every year, the media writes scathingly of the association. Twenty-one years ago, the Washington Post reported that most members weren't full-time journalists but rather "part-time freelancers for small publications in places like Lithuania and Bangladesh, and include a college professor, a retired engineer, a man who runs an 'auto referral service,' and another who until recently sold appliances in Burbank."

Even bold-faced industry names speak out. "In 1993, director Rob Reiner complained to the New York Times about HFPA 'press conferences' that were nothing more than glorified photo-ops for its members," Richard Roeper reported in his 2005 book, Schlock Value: Hollywood at Its Worst.

More recently, in December, the Hollywood Reporter noted that HFPA asked members — there are four Canadians on the list, whose bylines I didn't recognize and I struggled to find any meaningful and recent work of theirs online — to return expensive bottles of Tom Ford-branded perfumes they were sent promoting the designer-turned-director's film Nocturnal Animals. One HFPA member refused a miniature wedding cake crowned with an interracial couple that Focus sent him to promote the film Loving. "I can't come home from a long day at the Four Seasons (attending press junkets and screenings) to find decaying food on my doorstep," he told THR. "I can't even tell you how many bottles of cheap wine I've gotten this year. The alcohol tends to come from the foreign films, which send stuff from their country."

So why, asked Roeper, are the Golden Globes "taken so seriously when the voting is done by approximately ninety cliquish, junketeering entertainment reporters who have to produce only a handful of articles per year in order to remain in good standing with the HFPA?" Because as the entertainment press constantly tells us that the Globes "are like the primaries to the Oscars' general election, the Globes' stock just keeps on rising."

Meryl Streep speaks while accepting the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Sunday.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

To be clear, it's not that the HFPA always gets it wrong. A few times over the last decade, they've awarded films with more staying power than the Academy did — think The Social Network vs. King's Speech, for example, or The Descendants vs. The Artist. But they're not even a particularly good indicator of what the Academy will choose. The Producers Guild Awards and the Critics Choice Awards are much better predictors, both having chosen the same best-picture winner as the Academy eight times over the last 10 years.

So why doesn't the Academy, some 6,000 members strong, take the bull by the horns? Last year, Oscar voting wrapped up two days before the Golden Globe winners were announced. This year they were extended until January 13 — five days after the Globes. I don't know. And I don't know why I care. No one else really does.

The only one who hinted at the hypocrisy on Sunday night was Viola Davis. When she accepted her award for best supporting actress in Fences, she dutifully thanked the Hollywood Foreign Press. And then she gave a hint at how the sausages are made: "This is my fifth nomination," Davis said. "I took all the pictures, went to the luncheon." She had to pause because the room erupted in knowing nods and chuckles.

"Been there, done that," they seemed to say.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.

VICKY MOCHAMA

Salute to the outgoing Obamas — the world is finally yours

I'm so excited to see the Obamas out of office. It'll be so gratifying to see them free.

They haven't exactly announced their next steps, but if you look closely the hints are there. Barack recently published his 13th paper in an academic journal. (Which "peers" exist to peer-review a study by the president of the United States?) If academia doesn't work for him, he also recently served as a groomsman in the wedding of a White House staffer. Imagine being able to hire Barack Obama to be your groomsman. The Secret Service knows how to throw stag parties.

Michelle, too, could go in a completely different direction. She can rock couture like a fashion model and can out-dance the best video vixen. However, she seems genuinely to believe in serving the public. In her last public speech, she promised young people that she'd be there for them for the rest of her life.

Some people want Michelle to enter into politics slash lead the Rebel Alliance against Darth Donald. That won't happen for two reasons. First, she doesn't want to. Second, America doesn't deserve her! My god, the names that she's been called over the last eight years — it's a miracle she hasn't given up her citizenship for a Kenyan one just to troll Fox News.

When Michelle first said, "I wake up every morning in a house that was built by slaves," I knew she was a better person than I because I would have burned it down the day after Inauguration day. Michelle and Barack woke up every day and managed not to cuss out America. Just for good manners and restraint alone, they were the best First Family in living memory.

(Recall, for example, that the Clinton's pets were in a constant feud?)

After eight years living within the bubble of the White House, it will be great to see Barack and Michelle let loose a little. Mind you, it will be only by a smidge: they are still Ivy League-educated lawyers who just wrapped up two terms playing nice with Republicans.

It could be (almost) anything and I would be happy for them. Michelle could take up a corporate gig for the oil industry and I'd root for her. Barack could decide, as all the greats unfortunately do, to record a rap album and I would give it a four-star review on iTunes.

Personally, I want them to have a reality TV show. Obamas! Unleashed! It'll be like Keeping up the Kardashians but with guest appearances from Kofi Annan and the Pope.

The only joy to their farewells is knowing that soon we'll be saying hello to the real Obamas.

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metro LIFE

Your essential daily news

Wednesday, January 11, 2017

40%

Forty per cent of Canadian women aged 35 to 45 have sex at least once a week; 33 per cent get it on less than once a month, according to a Chatelaine survey.

Students at Ganja Yoga studio in Toronto smoke from a vaporizer before class begins. COURTESY ANDREW WILLIAMSON

Ganja: A gateway drug to fitness?

CULTURE

Pairing weed and yoga may seem like a trend, but it has ancient roots

Mila Petkovic
For Metro

Yoga teacher Joey Lundgreen, 35, smiles warmly at students. People chat casually before class with their neighbours, as they take turns breathing from the vaporizer. The atmosphere here is warm, open and connected.

With his lion-like mane and fully embodied voice, Lundgreen leads the class through a series of breathing exercises.

"When I started this practice, (it) was a very helpful effect for me because my body was kinda very stuck and not very strong or capable, and this has been true for many of our students too. For this reason it's sometimes called 'Ganja Yoga, the gateway drug to fitness,'" said Lundgreen.

The drug helps people relax and open up, says studio owner Lucelene Pancini, 43, who also teaches at the studio. The dynamic blond woman — a former Brazilian champion of judo and jiu-jitsu — opened Ganja Yoga on Bloor Street West in Toronto in 2011, and has seen the number of students grow steadily over the years.

"It's beautiful to work with ganja but I tell people you have to be responsible too. A lot of people come here who have never smoked, or done yoga before. Anxiety or paranoia can come, so I provide a safe space, so people can look and say 'Lu is here for me,'" said Pancini.

The studio uses an energizing strain of cannabis called Sativa at the beginning of the class and the more relaxing, meditative Indica before going into the final resting state, Savasana. For legal reasons, the studio asks participants to contribute their own cannabis for the practice but shares the vaporizer.

"Breathing becomes slower and deeper and muscles let go, so for sure you can go much further into the poses," said Pancini, who has been teaching yoga for 12 years. "In the mind, it's the same thing. Because you're in the present moment you stop to care what the person is doing beside you."

"I know a lot of people really like the smoking aspect. I feel like offering it helps to set the mood and harness an environment that's perhaps less pretentious than other studios can be. It's a mixed crowd but there's a real sense of community atmosphere here.

Yoga student Kat, 31

Ganja yoga studios have existed for some years now in major centres like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. With the impending legalization of weed, and more and more dispensaries popping up, perhaps we will see an increase in such studios.

"One of the things we're doing is taking the stigma out of it a bit, and formally bringing it into practice of yoga. It makes for a beautiful, very friendly community environment compared to the often beautiful but somewhat sterile usual yoga studios," said Lundgreen.

Although the idea of pairing weed and yoga may seem cutting edge or à la mode, the practice goes back centuries.

Hindu deity Lord Shiva is said to have introduced cannabis to the people as a medicinal and spiritual aid, and the Vedas (sacred Hindu texts dating from 1200 BCE) record Indian holy men pairing yoga with cannabis preparations to connect to the divine.

Although the use of the plant did not become stigmatized in India until the 1960s when the government clamped down on it after an international conference, the use of bhang (a milkshake-like drink made with ground cannabis) is permitted in India during celebrations.

"I see it as a beautiful sacrament that can take you to another level — spiritually, physically — at least a little bit faster," said Pancini.

JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

Moms baring all and bringing the truth

THE SHOW: Workin' Moms, Season 1, Episode 1
THE MOMENT: Baring it

First we see them from their (naked) shoulders up: three women sitting cross-legged in a Mommy-and-Me class circle, looking down at their own breasts and each other's.

"I feel like a proud show dog that didn't understand her days were numbered," says Frankie (Juno Rinaldi), a real estate agent. "Look at these things. It's like chicken skin."

Anne (Dani Kind), a psychiatrist, replies, "What are you talking about? Yours are OK." Kate (Catherine Reitman), a PR rep, says about hers, "They're not winning any blue ribbons. But they stuck in there. They might be a little deflated, but they're not throwing in the towel. I like them."

"I'm with you," Anne says. "I breastfed my first for five months. This is where they landed."

The camera pulls back. The three women are the only bare-chested ones in the group. They regard each other. "It could be worse, right?" Anne asks. "No, it could be better."

This is what we call an auspicious — and audacious — beginning. This is the series' opening scene and this is the message that Reitman (yes, daughter of Ivan), who also created and writes the show, is sending: We are going to bare all and we're going to tell the truth.

The Mommy-and-Me leader calls the circle a safe space, but Reitman and Co. know there's no such thing. Here we are in 2017 and still, very little in our society nurtures working moms (working humans). Mom-on-mom judgment still rankles.

This show exposes its characters' humanity and fights back with funny.

Workin' Moms airs Tuesdays on CBC.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

The message Catherine Reitman, left, (who also created and writes the show) is sending is: We are going to bare all and we're going to tell the truth. CONTRIBUTED

LIQUID ASSETS PETER ROCKWELL

Hold the food; an Amarone is perfect all on its own

With so much emphasis put on pairing wine with food you might wonder if there are any wines that just taste good on their own.

While I've always been the camp that says "drink what you want when you want," the majority of the world's wine-makers, especially those in Europe, see their output as a piece of a puzzle that needs an accompanying eatable to complete the picture.

Though I've had them with a meal more than once, Italy's Amarone reds are nicknamed the "conversation wine" because their up-front personalities beg to be sipped and discussed all by their lonesome.

Made from partially-dried grapes, an Amarone is a dry, beast of a red typified by dark plummy fruit, a raisiny sweetness and low acidity (which makes it even less food-friendly).

Masi's 2011 Costasera Amarone della Valpolicella Classico ($42.95-$51.99) considers itself the benchmark of the style for a reason. Nicely balanced, and ticking all the classic Amarone boxes, it's built to ponder over a night of Netflix.

Prices reflect the range across the country. Some products may not be available in all provinces.

ROSE REISMAN THE SAVVY EATER

THIS WEEK: Pita or Naan?

These favourite traditional breads are far from similar when it comes to nutrition.

PICK THIS

Ozery Bakery Pitas (1 pita)

Calories 300
Fat 2g
Sodium 440mg

SKIP THIS

PC Traditional Naan (1 naan)

Calories 380
Fat 10g
Sodium 800mg

HERE'S WHY

Equivalent in sodium to more than 2 KFC Original Recipe Chicken Thighs.

Pita and naan breads are both favourites for dipping and for serving with Greek and Indian dishes, but both have a very different nutritional profile. Naan bread is more moist and tender than pita bread due to the added ghee (butter oil) and soybean or canola oil, which increases the total fat to 10g versus the 5g in the pita. The naan bread also has double the amount of sodium than the pita.

DRIVER THEORY

Inside job suspected in Kardashian Paris heist

Investigators focused Tuesday on a possible inside job in the theft of more than $10 million worth of jewelry from Kim Kardashian West, after taking her chauffeur that night and his brother into custody.

Three Paris officials confirmed the arrest of the driver and his brother among 17 people taken into custody. Michael Madar, 40, and Gary Madar, 27, worked for the same livery company, according to officials.

The officials would not elaborate on how they believe the theft was planned. Kardashian West's bodyguard was gone for the night, and the robbers forced their way into the private apartment where she was staying, tied her up and made off with the jewelry.

A spokeswoman for the reality star said she had no comment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Your essential daily news

2017 Continental Supersports Bentley to reach top speed of 336 km/h

Let MDX do some of the work for you

REVIEW

2017 refresh comes with lane keep assist

Stephen Elmer
AutoGuide.com

So how do automakers cope with the speed of things when they are not ready with an all-new model? By wrapping new skin around an old frame and selling it as all-new. A prime example? Meet the 2017 Acura MDX.

For 2017, what's newest about the MDX is what you see. There are some packaging changes and some added content, but for the most part, the new styling is the biggest change here.

Some of the visual additions include the diamond pentagon grille, restyled jewel eye headlights and a fresh front bumper. I'll let you decide if it's good looking or not, but one thing seems certain: the exterior redesign was extensive, but the changes on the inside, not so much.

Moving inside the MDX, you would be hard pressed to name it as a new model, though that doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad cabin. First the positives. The Olive Ash Burl wood fund in our fully loaded model is gorgeous, as is the leather that wraps the comfortable seats. It feels especially nice on the steering wheel, offering a supple tactile feel.

To look at, the interior including its dual-screen centre stack is quite nice to look at, though the esthetics of the infotainment are let down by the operation. Thankfully Acura hasn't done away with the volume knob like Honda has in its products, but still, this infotainment system is not all that intuitive.

Slightly thicker sway bars on this SH-AWD model help in part to provide excellent body control in this 1,946-kilogram crossover. The MDX handles corners fairly flat, with handling that feels slightly tighter than its competitors. Some of that can also be chalked up to the SH-AWD system, which can send different amounts of torque to individual wheels to help the MDX rotate and stay nimble.

It's also nice and quiet in the cabin, while the V6 simultaneously manages a nice exhaust note; on the quieter side of aggressive, but enough to remind you that the V6 has a little bite to it.

Power doesn't come on until higher into the rev range, but the nine-speed transmission allows for power delivery to feel fairly strong on the low end.

For 2017, every single MDX model comes equipped with the AcuraWatch suite of safety features and driver-assist technologies, which includes collision-mitigating brakes, lane-departure warning, forward-collision warning, adaptive cruise control, road-departure mitigation and lane-keeping assist.

That last one is probably the most noticeable, as the lane keep assist in the MDX is quite aggressive and works quite well. To use it optimally, you keep your hands on the wheel but slightly loosen your grip, allowing the MDX to do some of the work for you.

THE CHECKLIST | 2017 ACURA MDX

THE BASICS

Engine: 3.5-litre V6
Power: 290 horsepower, 267 pound-feet of torque
Transmission: Nine-speed automatic
Fuel Economy (L/100 km): 12.2 city, 9 highway, 10.7 combined
Price: Starting at $53,690

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- Sharp looking
- Good safety technology

LEAVE IT

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- Infotainment system

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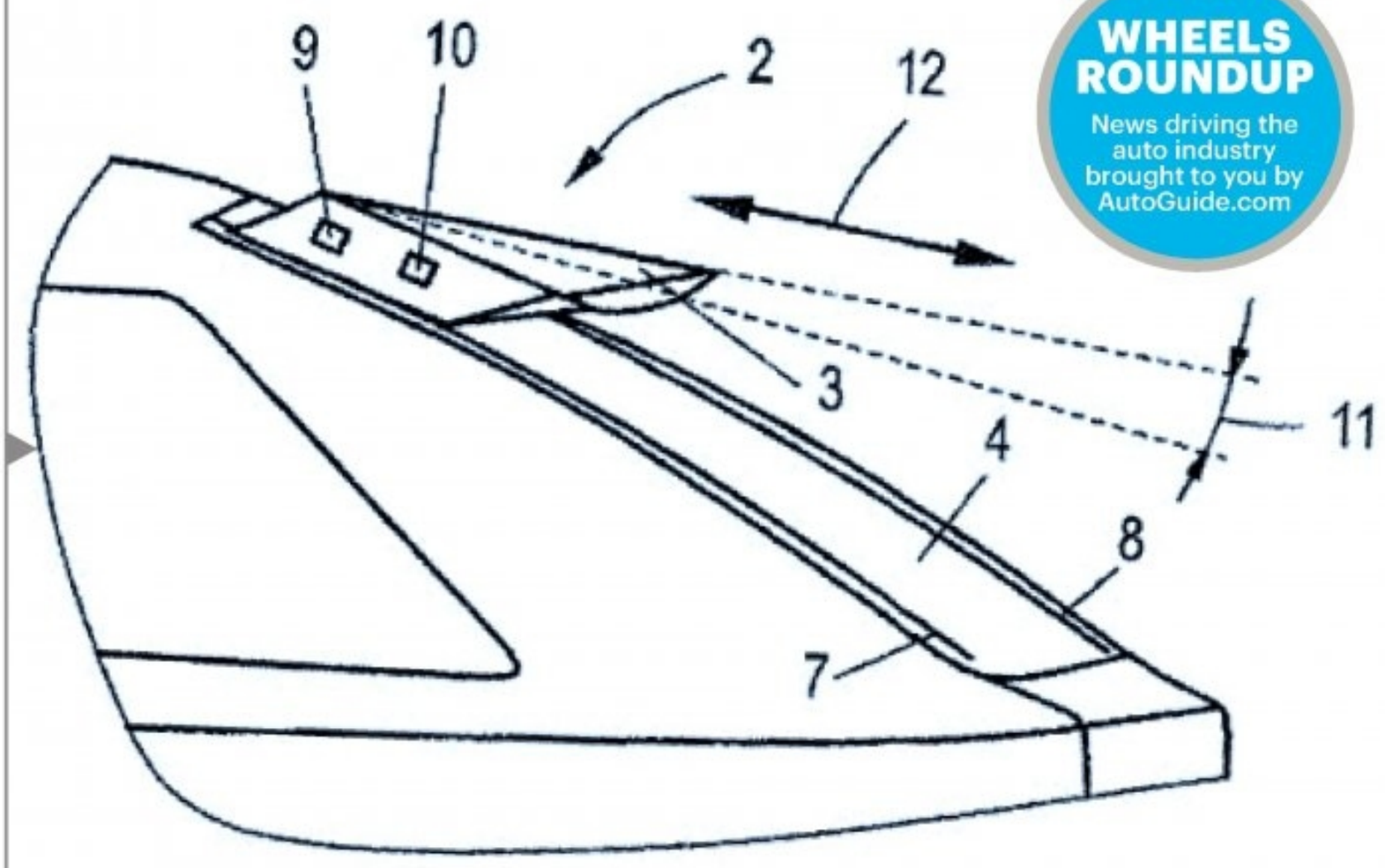
Audi's new patent a real spoiler alert

AERODYNAMICS

Audi creates a sliding wing

Audi has filed a patent with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) for a movable spoiler. Audi has designed this new system to improve aerodynamics on SUVs by eliminating "flow separation," a disturbance in airflow that increases drag which usually takes place about half way down the rear window. To fight this, the movable spoiler will lower at speeds over 80 km/h to the right height to combat this added drag. This allows the vehicle to keep its styling when travelling at low speeds, when the aerodynamic forces on the vehicle are negligible, and combat added drag once speed picks up. While active spoilers aren't new, this design is a new implementation of the idea, using two tracks on either side of the rear window to help the spoiler move up and down. STEPHEN ELMER/ AUTOGUIDE.COM



WHEELS ROUNDUP

News driving the auto industry brought to you by AutoGuide.com

IN BRIEF

Subaru WRX gets a light refresh, still no hatch

The restyled front fascia comes to all 2018 WRX models, though the changes aren't exactly big. WRX Limited and STI models get further restyling thanks to new steering-responsive LED headlights. Power for the WRX remains at 268 horsepower from a 2.0-litre turbocharged boxer four-cylinder engine. STEPHEN ELMER/ AUTOGUIDE.COM

Chevy Bolt named North American Car of the Year

The 2017 Chevy Bolt has been named the North American Car of the Year by a group of automotive journalists in the U.S. and Canada. The Bolt is Chevrolet's push to bring electric mobility to the masses "It is a game-changer that is not only a great electric vehicle; it's a great vehicle — period," said Mark Reuss, of GM.

STEPHEN ELMER/AUTOGUIDE.COM

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DODGE CARAVAN KIDS

metro SPORTS

"Maybe he flies under the radar but not in this room": Mark Barberio on Habs teammate Max Pacioretty who is still waiting for his all-star nod

Crystal-clear goal for '17

SKI CROSS

Thompson sets her sights on third overall World Cup title

Vincent Man
Metro | Toronto

What does one of the world's top skiers ask Santa for at Christmastime?

More success, naturally.

After winning the World Cup Cross Alps Tour by finishing first in three of six ski cross races last month, Marielle Thompson still has her sights set on the Crystal Globe as the season's overall champion.

Alas, she'll have to wait for the end of the ski cross calendar.

"The season's not over," Thompson told Metro in a telephone interview over the holidays from her hometown of Whistler. "My main goal this year was to win the World Cup overall, so that's still No. 1 on my radar. The Alps Tour was just confirmation that I'm on the right path.

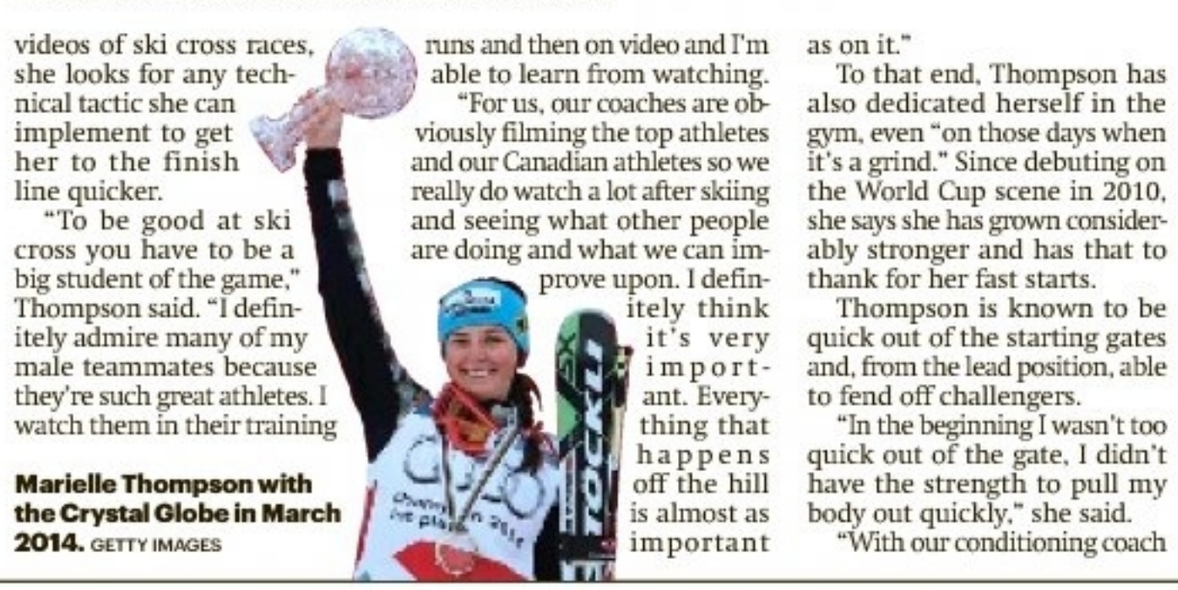
"Winning the Crystal Globe is still No. 1 on my list, so I have to keep skiing well and getting the results to stay on top."

With the goal of securing her third overall season title, the 24-year-old known as "Big Air Mar" is continually working on improving her skill set. And much of that process for Thompson happens off the hill.

A proponent of watching videos of ski cross races, she looks for any technical tactic she can implement to get her to the finish line quicker.

"To be good at ski cross you have to be a big student of the game," Thompson said. "I definitely admire many of my male teammates because they're such great athletes. I watch them in their training runs and then on video and I'm able to learn from watching.

"For us, our coaches are obviously filming the top athletes and our Canadian athletes so we really do watch a lot after skiing and seeing what other people are doing and what we can improve upon. I definitely think it's very important. Everything that happens off the hill is almost as important as on it."



Marielle Thompson skis to first place in the FIS World Cup ski cross on Dec. 13, in Arosa, Switzerland. LAURENT SALINO/AGENCE ZOOM/GETTY IMAGES

Marielle Thompson with the Crystal Globe in March 2014. GETTY IMAGES

To that end, Thompson has also dedicated herself in the gym, even "on those days when it's a grind." Since debuting on the World Cup scene in 2010, she says she has grown considerably stronger and has that to thank for her fast starts.

Thompson is known to be quick out of the starting gates and, from the lead position, able to fend off challengers.

"In the beginning I wasn't too quick out of the gate, I didn't have the strength to pull my body out quickly," she said.

"With our conditioning coach here in Whistler, we've really built up (my strength) these past few seasons. We have fitness testing every spring and in the fall and I keep improving so I can only get better."

The ski cross circuit resumes in Watles, Italy, this coming weekend. One of Thompson's four victories during the 2015-16 season came at Watles.

Big Air Mar won her Crystal Globes in 2012 and 2014 — a year in which she also won the gold medal at the Olympics in Sochi, Russia. She was in contention for another season title last year, but fell a spot short.

"I don't like being second," Thompson said. "Having been on top, I want to be there again and stay there. I know I can. I've been skiing well this year and I think I can carry that momentum into the rest of the season. It would just be the cherry on top of the cake."

If she does keep up her pace, she'll get more than dessert — she'll be celebrating Christmas again in March.

SKI FOR LESS

National Ski Day takes place on Saturday in support of Canadian ski teams.

- A total of 17 resorts will participate with special promotions and discounted lift tickets.
- Go to alpinecanada.org/nationalskiday for more information.

FIFA

Council approves 48-team World Cup

FIFA will expand the World Cup to 48 teams, adding 16 extra nations to the 2026 tournament that is likely to be held in North America.

President Gianni Infantino's favoured plan — for 16 three-team groups with the top two advancing to a round of 32 — was unanimously approved Tuesday by the FIFA Council.

It meets Infantino's election pledge of a bigger and more inclusive World Cup going beyond European and South American teams, which have won all 20 titles.

"We have to shape the football World Cup of the 21st century," said Infantino, who also promised funding increases for FIFA's 211 member federations at his election last February.

80

The expansion will increase the number of matches from 64 to 80.

With 80 matches instead of 64, FIFA forecasts the equivalent of $1 billion extra income at current rates from broadcasting and sponsor deals, plus ticket sales, compared to $5.5 billion revenue forecast for the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

FIFA projects an increased profit of $640 million despite some extra operating costs and prize money for teams.

FIFA's six continents should find out by May how many extra places they will each get.

"No guarantees have been made," Infantino said. "The only sure thing is that obviously with 48 teams everyone will have a bit more than they have today."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gianni Infantino
MICHAEL BUHOLZER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

NHL

Top rookies ascend to all-star status

It took less than a season for Auston Matthews and Patrik Laine to become NHL all stars.

The top two picks in the 2016 NHL draft were among the players selected Tuesday to participate in the upcoming 2017 NHL all-star weekend.

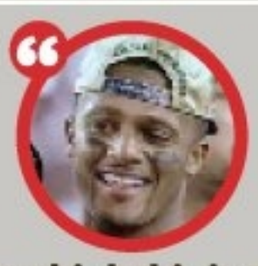
Laine, the rookie leading scorer with 21 goals and 37 points, is the lone Winnipeg Jets representative but his participation is questionable after he suffered a concussion in a recent game against Buffalo.

Erik Karlsson
GETTY IMAGES

Second in rookie scoring with 35 points, Maple Leafs centre Matthews joins a team captained by Montreal No. 1 Carey Price as well as Canadiens top defenceman Shea Weber and Ottawa rearguard Erik Karlsson.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NCAA FOOTBALL



You think this is the best of Clemson? Just wait the next five years.

Clemson QB Deshaun Watson after his team's comeback win over Alabama in the national championship

NFL PLAYOFFS

Pats favoured to beat Texans by 16

Before this weekend, just five NFL playoff games since 1966 have featured a team favoured by at least 15 points. Just one of those underdogs won the game (Google "Joe Namath" for more information on that).

There is nothing easy about this game for our offence.

Tom Brady

Oddsmakers don't think Brock Osweiler should guarantee the 16-point underdog Houston Texans (10-7) can beat Tom Brady and the Patriots (14-2) in New England. In fact, even if Brady were not playing, the Patriots would be favoured by nearly two touchdowns.

The Patriots beat the Texans 27-0 in Week 3 with third-string quarterback Jacoby Brissett leading the way. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MAKE IT TONIGHT

Crunchy Cauliflower Tacos

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

A light coating of bread crumbs give these veggie tacos an addictive crunch.

Ready in 30 minutes
Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 20 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients
- 1 head cauliflower
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 1/2 cup panko or bread crumbs
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp cumin
- salt and pepper
- 1 avocado
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 lime, juiced
- salt and pepper
- 6 to 8 tortillas
- extras like crumbled queso or feta cheese, cabbage slaw

Directions

1. Chop cauliflower into florets. In large bowl, toss with olive oil.

2. On a large, flat plate mix panko, spices and a bit of salt and pepper. Toss florets in mix until coated. Spread on a baking sheet and pop in oven 25 to 30 minutes, until cauliiflower is golden and tender.

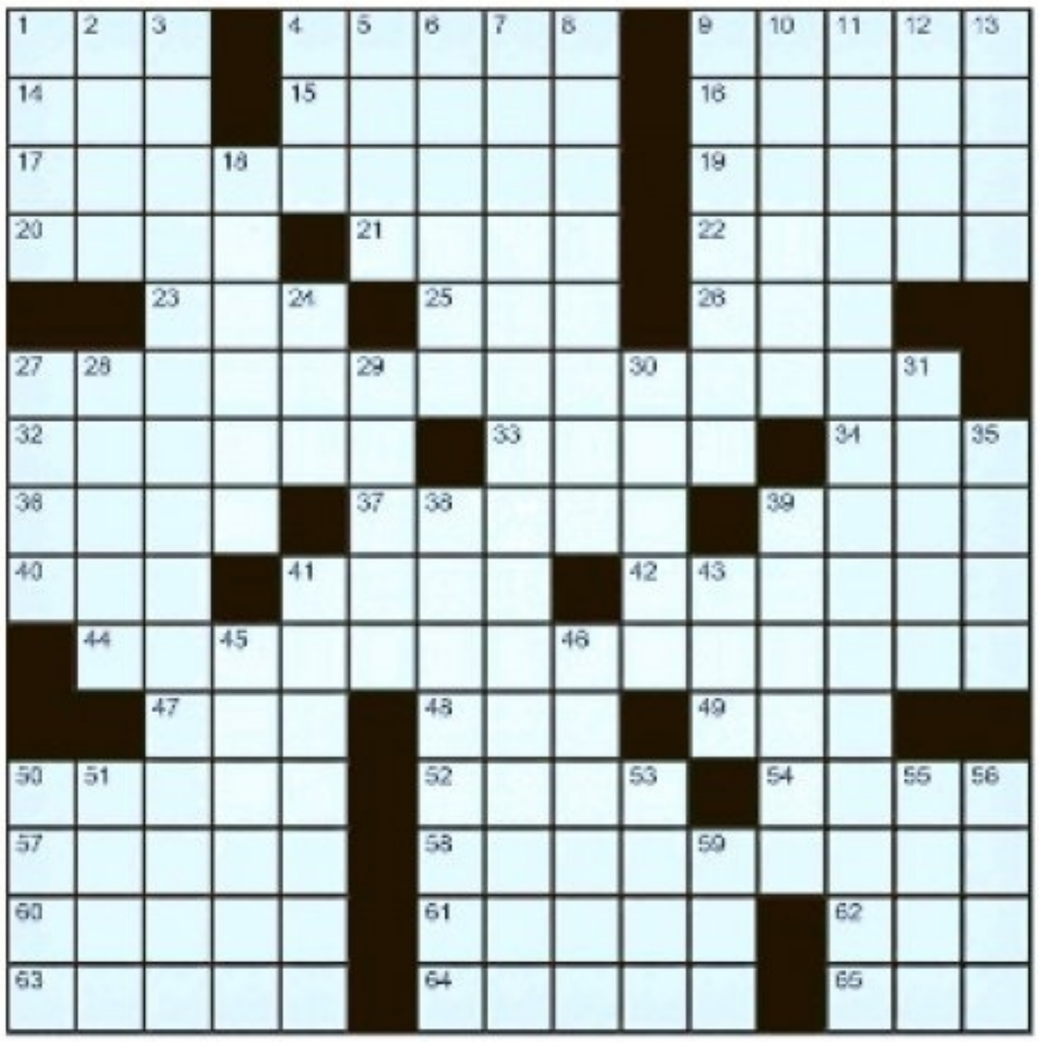
3. Meanwhile, combine avocado with sour cream and lime juice. Mash with fork and combine until smooth. Taste and add salt and pepper.

4. Prep all of your extras and warm up the tortillas. Spread a good dollop of avocado on each tortillas. Place a handful of the baked cauli on top, then load on your toppings.

FOR MORE MEAL IDEAS, VISIT SWEETPOTATOCHRONICLES.COM

CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Spa mask material
4. Olympic award
9. Sprays
14. "Take __, _ insist."
15. Andrea __ (Ill-fated ocean liner)
16. Mult., div. subj.
17. Refuge
19. 6/49, e.g.
20. Cabbage: French
21. Pet rights org.
22. "Party Rock Anthem" duo
23. Initials-sharers of The Miracles' lead singer
25. Suffix with 'Jacob'
26. War on Poverty agcy.
27. TV channel, with The, that gives coast-to-coast forecasts: 2 wds.
32. Archie and Edith's street on "All in the Family"
33. Many a moon
34. Jackie O's hubby
36. Macy Gray hit: 2 wds.
37. Hilly range
39. Accelerated
40. Sea: French
41. Baseball star Sammy
42. Rita Hayworth's 1953 title biblical role
44. '__ Authorized Personnel Only' (Warning on the door of a secretive facility)
47. Cow sound
48. "__ for two and me..."
49. Mel of baseball
50. Hilary of "Amelia" (2009)
52. Close-fitting
54. Ancient love god
57. Thomas __ (American colonial pamphleteer)
58. Wedding party member
60. __ ear
61. Brother, in Brossard
62. The Young Rascals tune: "How Can __ Sure"
63. Arboreal architectures
64. Uncanny
65. Mr. Pennington and Mr. Cobb

DOWN
1. Assorted [abbr.]
2. Salt Lake City's site
3. Drumheller discoveries: 2 wds.
4. Summer hrs. in Alberta
5. 'Right' suffix
6. "Mad Men" character Don
7. Big sports/concert venue in Toronto: 3 wds.
8. Birth a before-being-a-baby bird: 3 wds.
9. "Harry Potter and the Deathly __: Part 1" (2010)
10. "__..." (Start of Juliet's famous line)
11. Do motionless modelling for the painter: 4 wds.
12. Beyonce's "Cadillac Records" (2008) role
13. "Vamoose!"
18. Respectful gesture when meeting The Queen
24. Talking Heads song: "And __ Was"
27. Lark
28. Dinner deleter
29. Boo-boo
30. Dita Von __ (Queen of Burlesque)
31. Krispy __ Doughnuts
35. Notion
38. "Has testing been done on this product?": 3 wds.
39. Scheduled
41. Irish writer Bram's family
43. Hubbub
45. Shakespearean verse
46. Stretched more tightly
50. Michael J. Fox show, "__ City"
51. Lessen
53. British songstress Ms. Halliwell
55. Dionne Warwick's "Walk __"
56. Fr. women-with-halos
59. Born, in biographies

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Today you're not afraid to dream big! You're entertaining big plans for your future, and you might make big proposals to bosses, parents and VIPs.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
You're excited about travel plans -- and we're talking big travel plans! Likewise, some of you have big ideas about higher education, publishing and the media.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
You feel confident during discussions about inheritances and shared property today, which is why you definitely will steer things the way you want them to go.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
Relations with partners and close friends are intense today. Everything seems to be bigger than life. Your wants are important, and so are the wants of someone else.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
You are busy at work today because you want to accomplish so much. Plus, you have high standards for yourself and others. "Shoot for the moon!"

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
This is a playful, romantic and funloving day! Make plans to socialize with others. Enjoy sports events, fun activities with children and schmoozing with friends.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Your interactions with a parent or a family member will be strong today. You know what you want, and this person knows what he or she wants. Surely you can meet somewhere in the middle.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
This is a busy day! Be careful that you don't overbook short trips, appointments, errands and talking to everyone. Plus, there's all that reading and writing you have to do. Gasp!

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Today you're focused on money and cash flow. Caution: Do not go overboard or be overly confident. Make sure you know what you're doing, then do it.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You feel empowered today because the Sun is in your sign, getting a boost from lucky Jupiter. Use today to go after what you want. You likely will get it.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You will be effective working alone or behind the scenes today. Sometimes that's actually the most powerful place to be, because you're not distracted by external business.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
This is a popular day for you! Enjoy hanging out with others, and also enjoy professional associations with colleagues or people in clubs and groups. Don't hesitate to speak up.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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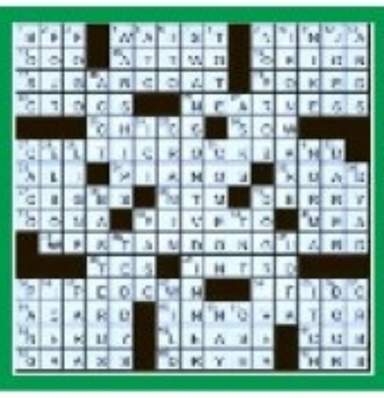

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8	4	1	9	3	2	6	5	7
3	5	7	4	6	8	2	9	1
1	6	3	2	8	9	7	4	5
7	8	4	6	5	1	9	3	2
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